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SUBJECT: LIBERIA: EMBASSY UNVEILS PLAQUE IN HONOR OF SLAIN AMCIT
NUNS

11. SUMMARY: The Charge unveiled a plaque July 30 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Cathedral in Monrovia in honor of five American nuns who were killed in 1992 during Liberia's civil conflict. The unveiling ceremony was attended by approximately 150 people including the Catholic Apostolic Administration, Minister of Foreign Affairs Olubanke King Akerele, Minister of Labor Kofi Woods, and four Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners. Monsignor Andrew Karnley, the acting head of the Catholic Church in country, reiterated his call for a War Crimes Tribunal for Liberia because he believes that "true forgiveness" can only come with "real justice." END SUMMARY.

12. The Sacred Heart Cathedral is the seat of the Catholic Church in Liberia and was the Sisters' home parish. The ceremony began with priests' and nuns' shared personal memories about the women, then the Charge spoke to honor them.

13. During his closing remarks, Monsignor Karnley reiterated that the official position of the Catholic Church in Liberia is that there should be a War Crimes Tribunal to prosecute the worst perpetrators. Karnley said that "true forgiveness" can only come with "real justice." The unveiling ceremony received positive press coverage in three daily newspapers, on national and local radio, and also on television.

14. Sixty-five of our locally engaged employees knew the nuns personally, attended the ceremony, and a few contributed significantly to the event. Members of our Facilities and Maintenance crew who were former students at the Sisters' schools built an impressive four foot tall monument with a surrounding flowerbed to hold the Embassy's plaque. One Embassy painter, Julius Jackson, sang an inspiring song during the ceremony to honor the nuns' memory.

15. The five nuns died in October 1992 during the NPFL's "Operation Octopus." On October 20, the security guard of Sacred Heart Convent feared for his family's life, but bullets were flying everywhere, so it was too dangerous for him to walk home. Sisters Mary Joel Kolmer and Barbara Ann Muttra offered to drive him the short distance to his house. Their car was ambushed by NPFL rebels and all three were killed in the crossfire. Sisters Agnes Mueller, Shirley Kolmer and Kathleen McGuire were concerned about their Sisters' fate but could not leave their convent because of the heavy fighting outside. Three days later, on October 23, the NPFL rebels stormed the convent itself, shot those three Sisters, and kidnapped the aspirants and another family who happened to be there at the time. The perpetrators have never been arrested or charged.

16. The unveiling ceremony was held to coincide with the five nuns' investiture into the distinction of Grand Commander in the Order of the Star of Africa, in a ceremony presided by President Sirleaf on July 24. Their sacrifice has also surfaced repeatedly during recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings. Other organizations, such as the Lutheran Church and women's NGOs have in recent weeks teamed up with the TRC to hold ceremonies and thematic hearings related to other events related to the civil war.

ROBINSON